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IN THE CLAIMS:
Please amend the claims as follows:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for supporting virtual path/virtual channel (VP/VC) groups in asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) switching systems that implement ATM automatic protection switching (APS) in which traffic flows ~~substantially continuously~~ from a source on two paths and a destination selects traffic from only one of the paths at a time for further processing, the method ~~including~~ comprising:

creating a groups table, the groups table having an entry for each of the two ~~instances~~ paths of every active VP/VC ~~group's member set~~ group, each active VP/VC group having an associated set of member circuits, each ~~said~~ entry indicating whether the cells for that ~~instance~~ path ~~of the member circuits~~ of that VP/VC group should be forwarded or discarded, each ~~said~~ entry ~~referencing a corresponding entry in the groups table~~ referenced by means of a pointer field;~~ the method including~~

accessing a relevant entry in the groups table when a cell ~~for that circuit~~ arrives on one of the two paths, the relevant entry associated with the one of the two paths, the relevant entry including a status value;[[,]] and

discarding the cell if the ~~accessed~~ status value is ~~"discard"~~ indicative of a discard status ~~and~~ or forwarding the cell ~~otherwise~~ if the status value is not indicative of a status other than the discard status.

2.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein forwarding the cell ~~includes~~ comprises:

maintaining a lookup table ~~containing~~ including ~~entries~~ a lookup table entry for each circuit in the set of member circuits of each VP/VC group for forwarding cells[[,]]; and

forwarding the cell as specified in the ~~specific~~ lookup table entry for that circuit.

3.   Cancelled

4.   Cancelled

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5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein ~~the~~ a number of supported groups is determined in part by ~~the~~ a number of bits allocated to the ~~groups table~~ pointer field ~~in the lookup table entry~~ associated with the circuit for the cell.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein any value of the pointer field other than zero constitutes a valid index into the ~~group~~ groups table.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein a value of zero in the pointer field of the ~~lookup table entry~~ groups table indicates that the corresponding VC circuit or VP circuit is not a member of ~~a group~~ any of the VP/VC groups, and that ~~that VC circuit's or VP circuit's forward/discard status should be determined from the lookup table entry itself~~ a forward/discard status of the respective circuit is stored in a lookup table entry associated with the circuit.

8.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the groups table is implemented as part of a module of the switching system.

9.   (New) The method of claim 1, wherein a number of supported VP/VC groups is determined in part by a size of the groups table.